

Riverside's Top 25 Restaurants



2009

The Twenty-Five
Best Restaurants in Riverside





Welcome to the *2009 Top 25 Restaurants of Riverside Dining Guide*.

Riverside has become a destination for restaurant goers in the Inland Empire. There is a buzz in the air as chefs at our finest restaurants receive awards and honors (The James Beard Foundation has honored Restaurant Omakase Chef Brein) and draw diners from throughout the region.

There is a growing collection of national restaurants opening and expanding in our community: we now host a Yard House, PF Chang's, Elephant Bar, Cheesecake Factory...you name it and we have it. However, Riverside also has a local restaurant scene that is worthy of celebration. A few years ago, I asked Inland Empire food and restaurant critic Allan Borgen to sample what Riverside uniquely has to offer. At times his objective opinion has surprised me and he has found some hidden treasures. This year is no exception. Allan has included some restaurants that are new to Riverside and some long-time restaurateurs who have taken their offerings to a new level.

Again this year, we partner with Ted Weggeland of the Entrepreneurial Hospitality Corporation to bring this guide to local residents and guests. My wife and I plan to use this guide as we dine out throughout the year and hope you will do the same.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald Loveridge". The signature is stylized with a large, looping "R" and a cursive "Loveridge".

Ron Loveridge
Mayor



With so many great restaurants in Riverside it was difficult to select just 25.

When reviewing a restaurant, I take into consideration each of the quality of the food, price paid for the dishes, service, ambiance, and cleanliness. In some cases, the food and ambiance was good, but the service was not up to par. Though it was difficult I am confident that I found 25 of the best non-chain restaurants in Riverside.

This year we have quite a few newcomers added to the list like Bo Bo Thai, Phood on Main, CP's Place, Havana Café and Smokey Canyon BBQ, Gerard's Eve Bistro and Saffron. I also felt the need to add an Honorable Mention category since those restaurants also scored well but were a little short of the winners.

In view of the economic conditions we face, supporting locally owned businesses are essential to a City's life blood and small locally owned restaurants really need your help. I encourage you to try each of these winning restaurants and become your own food critic.

For those restaurants that were not included, there is always next year. If you have a favorite and want to tell me about it, please email me at allan@allanborgen.com.

Until next year, happy eating!

Allan Borgen

Food Critic

Member: Southern California

Restaurant Writers;

International Food, Wine

& Travel Writers Association

www.letsdineoutshow.com

Anchos Southwest Grill

(951) 352-0240

10773 Hole Avenue

Riverside 92505

Type of Cuisine: Southwestern

Price Range: \$-\$\$

Child Friendly

Full Bar

Price Range

\$ = Up to \$10

\$\$ = \$11-\$20

\$\$\$ = \$21 and Up

This long-time family favorite continues to serve the best in Southwestern cuisine. Meats, poultry and fish are grilled over mesquite wood resulting in a terrific smoky flavor. Their fresh roasted chili salsa is among the best I have ever had. The food is fresh, the portions are on the large side, and the wonderful home-made flour tortillas remain magnificent. While the regional sauces will knock your socks off, the décor is reminiscent of a festive Pueblo-style village. My favorite items include any of their fresh fish entrees, the *pork ribs with Chile Ancho BBQ sauce*, the *mesquite grilled bacon wrapped shrimp*, the popular *carne asada*, and their sizzling hot *fajitas and ribs combo*. Keep up the good work Anchos!



Bo Bo Thai Restaurant

(951) 788-1995

6736 Brockton Avenue

Riverside 92506

(951) 788-1995

Type of Cuisine: Thai

Price Range: \$-\$\$

Child Friendly

Beer & Wine

Located in Brockton Arcade, this small family owned and operated restaurant offers the lucky residents of Riverside some of the best Thai cuisine around. Inspired by a well known Thai restaurant in Los Angeles where the family worked, the menu reflects traditional and original dishes that will surely please everyone who appreciates quality Thai food. Some of the many dishes that I have tried and enjoyed were the *Spicy Noodles*, the popular lamb, ground beef, pork or chicken with chilies, onions, rice powder and lime juice, the delicious *pepper and garlic beef*, the unique *deep fried trout* with mango sauce, the wonderful *sliced BBQ beef* with lime and garlic and the *crispy ground fish* with mango sauce. The servers are friendly, the food is fresh and full of the wonderful flavors of Thailand, the portions are more than ample, and the prices are outstanding.

Cactus Cantina

(951) 789-0211

151 E. Alessandro Boulevard
Riverside 92508

Type of Cuisine: American/Continental

Price Range: \$-\$\$

Child Friendly · Full Bar

Cactus Cantina is a great family restaurant with sandwiches, steaks, seafood, chicken, pork, and Mexican dishes that are worth trying again and again. Best of all, the prices fit into most anyone's budget. The fact that they use fresh ingredients and make most everything by scratch is admirable considering most other similar restaurants often use frozen or already prepared foods.

Dishes that I found to be outstanding and worth ordering again were the steamed *mussels marinière* in a marinara dill sauce, the *Cajun salmon*, the *New York strip steak*, *chicken fajitas*, and the *shrimp Alfredo*. For dessert, the *cheesecake* wrapped in a crispy fried tortilla with chocolate and raspberry sauce should not be missed. I am glad that a restaurant like this exists in Riverside!



Café Sevilla

(951) 778-0611

3252 Mission Inn Avenue
Riverside 92507

Type of Cuisine: Spanish /Tapas

Price Range: \$-\$\$\$

Older Child Friendly · Full Bar

Set in an elegant yet casual atmosphere with sultry sounds of Flamenco music filtering throughout the dining room, Sevilla is a unique dining destination restaurant that should be experienced by all who like culinary adventure at its finest. In addition to some terrific hot and cold Tapas (Spanish appetizers plates), their menu features an outstanding array of Spanish dishes that you will love. The house special, *Paella Valenciana*, is their signature dish; however, the *striped bass cantabrico* with a creamy garlic herb sauce with shrimp, clams, fresh rosemary, and thyme is also a worthy choice. *Baked Basque rabbit* and *pasta Mallorca* with salmon, shrimp, calamari, and grilled vegetables with crumbled goat cheese are just a few of the many fine entrees you can expect to find.

From the Tapas menu the *grilled lamb skewer* with apple cider vinegar reduction, *seafood empanada Barcelona*, and *dates stuffed with blue cheese* wrapped with bacon with an apple vinegar glaze are just a few of the delicious *Tapas* selection you can order. Sevilla also offers a first class Sunday brunch complete with a sumptuous array of salads, specialty Spanish hot entrees, carving and omelet making stations, traditional breakfast items, and some terrific desserts including a hot chocolate fountain in which to dip your favorite fruits, marshmallow, and other treats. Dining at Sevilla is a real treat and should not be overlooked.

Ciao Bella Ristorante

(951) 781-8840

1630 Spruce Street
Riverside, 92507

Type of Cuisine: Italian

Price Range: \$-\$\$\$

Older Child Friendly
Full Bar

Ciao Bella remains one of the classiest Italian restaurants in the Inland Empire. The menu features a variety of traditional Italian items with a few original dishes thrown into the mix. Like most fine dining restaurants, the servers are professional and friendly and the food is outstanding. Some of the menu's standouts include the unique *Ciao Bella lasagna roll*, *tuna Carpaccio*, *pesto chicken pizza*, *portabella N.Y. steak*, *green garlic shrimp*, *roasted rosemary chicken*, stunning slowly braised *veal osso bucco*, and the marvelous *seared duck over mango risotto* with a delicious reduced port mango sauce. For dessert, I highly suggest trying the *tiramisu* with *amaretto mousse* and *espresso soaked lady fingers*. The food is delicious, the ambiance is relaxing and romantic, and the prices are right.



Citrus City Grille

(951) 274-9099

3555 Riverside Plaza Drive #100
Riverside, 92506

Type of Cuisine: Italian/Californian

Price Range: \$-\$\$\$

Live music nightly

Older Child Friendly
Full Bar

Citrus City Grille, in the Riverside Plaza, is an exciting restaurant whose interior is inspired by the rich agricultural history of Riverside. Both the cuisine, which is a fusion of the best Italian and California dishes, and the bright, multi citrus-colored interior are very inviting. In addition to the large dining room and spacious outdoor seating area, there is a large lounge area where live music fills the air and patrons can sip a glass of their favorite wine, beer, or one of over 50 signature martinis. The menu offers some sumptuous items which includes a tasty *blackened salmon penne*, *Chilean sea bass* with asparagus risotto, fantastic *pork tenderloin* with gorgonzola mashed potatoes, and the terrific *stuffed chicken*. For dessert, the marvelous *Grand Marnier soufflé* is the perfect ending to a nice dining experience.

CP's Place

(951) 653-4142

1355 East Alessandro Boulevard

Riverside 92508

Type of Cuisine: French/American

Price Range: \$\$-\$\$\$

Older Child Friendly

Beer & Wine

Hiding out in a small strip mall in the Mission Grove area on Alessandro is a surprisingly fine dining restaurant that serves some outstanding French and American dishes that I really loved. Owner/chef Carl Solomko and his kitchen staff create inspiring dishes that are both dazzling and delicious. The interior is clean, simply decorated yet very relaxing. Open only for dinner, the menu features lots of options. Their "small plate" options include such creative dishes as *duck à l'Orange Napoleon* with candied orange crisps and sake plum sauce, *chipotle roasted quail*, and *Asian slaw shrimp*. The entrees feature such outstanding dishes as their *porcini crusted prime top sirloin*, *seared sesame cruste ahi tuna*, bone-in *pan roasted pork rib chop*, a luscious bone-in *rib eye steak* with a horseradish cream sauce, and *fresh Atlantic salmon* with a nice orange butter sauce. CP's Place is a real culinary find and I can't wait to try other tempting dishes they masterfully prepare.



Crest Café

(951) 784-2233

5225 Canyon Crest Drive #40

Riverside, 92507

Type of Cuisine: American/Italian

Price Range: \$\$-\$\$\$

Child Friendly

Catering

Full Bar

The Crest Café in the Canyon Crest Towne Center is a casual, yet elegant looking restaurant serving some fantastic breakfast, lunch, and dinner items in a beautiful dining room adorned with dark woods, high ceilings, and a very large bar in the center of the dining room. The menu features both American and Italian favorites like *cinnamon apple Belgian waffles*, *stuffed cinnamon & raisin French toast*, a delicious *chicken avocado burger*, a zesty *blackened rib eye steak*, *chicken piccata*, plus a fantastic *bread pudding*. The portions are large and the food is fresh, tasty, and affordably priced.

Creola's Fine Dining

(951) 653-8150

1015 E. Alessandro Boulevard

Riverside, 92508

(951) 653-8150

Type of Cuisine: American/Continental

Price Range: \$\$

Older Child Friendly

Beer & Wine

Offering a tempting selection of American/Continental dishes with a French flair, Creola's is a wonderful restaurant for those wanting a refined, yet casual atmosphere with a touch of country. If you like lamb, you must try the *lamb shank* with dill & sour cream, while the oven crisp *sea bass filet* with horseradish relish & mustard and the *fresh catfish* with mustard cream sauce are also excellent choices. Other favorites include the old fashioned *pot roast of beef*, the *chicken* with a sherry cream sauce and Swiss cheese, the *linguini* with clams and garlic sauce, and the *filet mignon* with bacon and mushrooms. The food is tasty, the portions are generous, and the prices are excellent.



Cuban Café

(951) 785-9400

5180 Arlington Avenue

Riverside, 92504

Type of Cuisine: Cuban

Price Range: \$\$-\$\$\$

Child Friendly

Beer & Wine

Cuban Café is a delightful family owned restaurant featuring home-style Cuban cuisine at very affordable prices. Owner Mario Ortiz is a perfectionist and his passion for authenticity and freshness can be seen throughout the restaurant. Bright paintings of Cuban citizens (painted by the owner's mother) line the walls while festive Cuban music can be heard throughout the small dining room. To add even more ambiance and authenticity, a large flat screen television shows a travel tape featuring various Cuban cities, monuments, and its proud people. Dishes that I recommend are: the *empanadillas*; the delicious *ropa vieja*, *shredded beef* sautéed and simmered in a Cuban Creole sauce; the *churrasco*, a hand-cut *skirt steak* served with a zesty chimichurri sauce; the incredible slow roasted *lechon asado*, *pork roasted* with a sour orange garlic marinade; and the popular *chicken fricase*. The portions are on the large side and the quality and prices are excellent.

Dona Timo's La Cascada Mexican Seafood Restaurant

(951) 684-8614

3635 University Avenue
Riverside 92501

Type of Cuisine: Mexican

Price Range: \$-\$\$

Child Friendly

Beer & Wine

La Cascada has a long history of being one of the most popular Mexican seafood restaurants in Riverside, but now the owners of Dona Timo's Mexican restaurant in Fontana have merged their great dishes from the Jalisco region of Mexico to make Dona Timo's La Cascada one of the most exciting Mexican restaurants in the Inland Empire. Building on the previous owner's original recipes, the food that comes out of the small kitchen in ample portions is fresh and delicious.

Dishes that I must have when I dine there include the fantastic *Oysters Rockefeller*, *jalapeno shrimp enchiladas*, their signature seafood-laden *cioppino*, the *seafood molcajete*, and the *basil lobster enchiladas*. Their fresh fish entrees are sure to please, as are their *carne asada* and grilled or fried *fish tacos*. There are many Mexican restaurants in Riverside but Dona Timo's La Cascada is certainly one of the best, if not the best, of the bunch.



Gerard's Eve Bistro

(951) 687-4882

9814 Magnolia Avenue
Riverside 92503

Type of Cuisine: French

Price Range: \$\$-\$\$\$

Older Child Friendly

Beer & Wine

Gerard's Eve Bistro has experienced many changes throughout the years; however, the current management is definitely one of the best and the food is as good as it has ever been. The small, quaint and romantic French country décor offers a very relaxed setting while the service is professional and friendly. Some great dishes that should not be overlooked include *Swiss fondue* with apples & baguette slices, marvelous *French onion soup*, classic *duck confit*, delicious *chicken Marie Antoinette*, and my favorites, the *chicken cordon bleu*, *beef bourguignon*, and *veal Oscar*. As expected, the sauces are rich and loaded with passion. Gerard's remains a fine dining restaurant for those special nights out.

Mario's Place

(951) 684-7755

3646 Mission Inn Avenue
Riverside 92501

Type of Cuisine: Contemporary Northern Italian

Price Range: \$\$-\$\$\$

Full Bar

Mario's Place is one of Riverside's oldest fine dining Italian restaurants serving some of the best and most creative Italian dishes in Southern California. This "hip," upscale, and classy restaurant is located directly across from the historic Mission Inn and serves an array of delicious northern Italian dishes with touches of southern France and California thrown in. The restaurant has won many prestigious awards for its extraordinary food and first class service thanks to Owner/Chef Leone Palagi and his brothers, who have kept Mario's Place in the forefront of fine dining here in Riverside.

Some of the many dishes worth trying include the wood oven baked *pear & gorgonzola pizza*, *grilled swordfish* with a sweet onion, bell pepper and thyme compote, the popular *pan-roasted veal chops*, the delicious *grilled prime angus New York steak* with 15-year-old balsamic and horseradish infused oil, and the *Scottish salmon* cooked in parchment with citrus & ginger. Better yet, choose Chef Leone's wonderful Prix Fixe dinners with wine pairings! In addition to the excellent food, live jazz can be enjoyed every Friday and Saturday from 10:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. So whether you want to impress or just enjoy a memorable meal, Mario's Place is truly a special culinary dining experience.

Mission Inn Hotel & Spa Restaurants

When visiting any of the restaurants associated with the Mission Inn Hotel & Spa, make sure you allow yourself enough time to casually stroll around the lush grounds and marvel at the beauty and rich history that the majestic Inn has to offer, both inside and out.

Mission Inn:

Bella Trattoria Italian Bistro

(888) 326-4448

3649 Mission Inn Avenue
Riverside 92501

Type of Cuisine: Italian

Price Range: \$-\$\$

Older Child Friendly

Full Bar

Bella Trattoria Italian Bistro is one of the historic Mission Inn & Spa's restaurants which is located on the Main Street Pedestrian Mall at Sixth Street. The bistro setting features fresh and delicious Southern Italian cuisine, including some terrific brick oven pizzas. The food is fresh and the menu is simple yet oh so good! Some of my favorite dishes are the spicy *Sicilian calzone*, *penne pasta* with pesto cream sauce, incredible *baked lasagna*, and their delicious *Panini sandwiches*.

Mission Inn:
Duane's Prime Steaks & Seafood
(888) 326-4448
3649 Mission Inn Avenue
Riverside 92501
Type of Cuisine: American
Price Range: \$\$\$
Full Bar

Featuring only USDA prime beef and the finest in seafood and fish entrees, Duane's Prime Steaks and Seafood is the Inland Empire's only AAA Four Diamond Restaurant and a winner of numerous prestigious food and wine awards. The restaurant is elegant and stunning in its décor and is the perfect setting to propose, impress, or pamper yourself or a loved one.

For starters, the lobster tempura and the honey-garlic shrimp are excellent ways to whet your appetite, while favorite dinner entrees include the impressive juicy 25-oz. *rib chop*, the double cut *lamb chops*, the classic *Steak Diane* prepared tableside along with the *potato-crust halibut with a citrus-dill sauce*, and the *seared deep sea scallops*. Wonderful side dishes to compliment your entrees are available as well, like the *creamed spinach* and the *grilled portabella mushrooms*. If elegance, professional service, and award winning food are in your plans, Duane's is definitely a top choice.



Mission Inn:
Las Campanas
(888) 326-4448
3649 Mission Inn Avenue
Riverside 92501
Type of Cuisine: Mexican
Price Range: \$\$
Older Child Friendly
Full Bar

Las Campanas is an upscale Mexican restaurant that is a scenic and relaxing setting to enjoy both terrific traditional and original Mexican cuisine.

Dishes I really like include the boldly flavored *Bistec Adobado*, their signature *chilies rellenos*, the zesty *chile verde*, their terrific *carnitas*, *seared halibut*, and the impressive *lobster enchilada* paired with a crispy stone ground corn tortilla *filet mignon taco*. Don't forget to try one of their huge signature margaritas.

Mission Inn:
Mission Inn Restaurant
(888) 341-6719
3649 Mission Inn Avenue
Riverside 92501
Type of Cuisine: Continental
Price Range: \$-\$\$\$
Child friendly
Full Bar

This impressive restaurant offers breakfast, lunch, and dinner in two distinct settings. The large dining room is impressive with its open kitchen, beautiful Mediterranean tiles, and overhead ceiling mural; while the adjacent Spanish patio with colorful plants, lush greenery, and beautiful surrounding architecture is yet another jewel in the Mission Inn restaurant family.

Chef Alfredo Gutierrez continues to add flair and excitement to the menu and its wonderful entrees. The *braised prime short ribs*, *roisserie chicken*, *jumbo shrimp Provencal*, and the magnificent prime rib are just a few of the delicious dishes served. One item you must try is their Blue Bayou (restaurant in Disneyland) inspired *Monte Cristo sandwich*. It is absolutely the best! This "king of sandwiches" is offered only at lunch time, but if I were you, I would call ahead and ask the chef or manager if they would please make a Monte Cristo sandwich for you for dinner. You must try this sandwich.



Monark Asian Bistro
(951) 683-1678
5225 Canyon Crest Drive, # 64
Riverside 92507
Type of Cuisine: Thai & Chinese
Price Range: \$-\$\$
Child Friendly
Beer & Wine

The Monark Asian Bistro in the Canyon Crest Plaza is one of the most elegant and impressive restaurants in Riverside. Serving traditional and original Thai and Chinese food, this restaurant has been around for more than 25 years and with good reason, the food is delicious! Dishes I highly recommend include *strawberry chicken*, *Monark steak* with a tasty lemon grass garlic sauce, fresh *miso salmon*, *Szechwan fish*, and the *Talay Quartet* with sautéed scallops, fish, shrimp, calamari, onions and basil in a zesty Thai chili sauce. The food is fresh, the prices are very reasonable, and the flavors will keep you coming back again and again.

Olio Steak and Seafood Ristorante at the Marriott Hotel

(951) 786-7147

3400 Market Street
Riverside, 92501

Type of Cuisine: American/Continental

Price Range: \$\$-\$\$\$

Child Friendly

Full Bar

Olio's Steak and Seafood Ristorante located in the Marriot Hotel in downtown Riverside offers a wide array of breakfast, lunch and dinner entrees with Chef Luis Martinez's delicious signature touches. This casual restaurant features some outstanding Italian, steak and seafood entrees with the *salmon Florentine*, *porcini filet mignon*, *Pescadores risotto*, with scallops, shrimp, fresh basil, and asparagus in a wonderful sun-dried tomatoes and Romano cheese cream sauce, and the chicken *saltimbocca*, with sautéed fresh sage and prosciutto being my favorites.

In addition to tasty food, Martini's Lounge, which features more than 200 martinis, offers a unique collection of Vodka infused drinks with fresh fruit, vegetables, spices and herbs along with a whopping array of unique Martinis that are fun and, oh so good. Most people do not think of dining at a restaurant unless they are a guest at the hotel; however, Olio's Steak and Seafood Ristorante is definitely a restaurant that locals should consider.



Peking Chinese Restaurant

(951) 687-4822

11170 Magnolia Avenue, #C
Riverside 92505

Type of Cuisine: Chinese

Price Range: \$\$-\$\$\$

Child Friendly

Beer & Wine

Peking Chinese Restaurant, tucked away in a shopping center, serves up some of the best Chinese food in Riverside. The dining room features small hanging Chinese lanterns and a huge wooden relief mural. Two well-kept fish tanks set the mood while the aromas of ginger, garlic, and other ingredients fill the air. Some of the many Chinese dishes I always order include *Kung Pao shrimp*, *general chicken*, the popular *three flavor hot noodle soup* with hand made noodles, the *fried fish* with hot garlic sauce, the plump and crispy *orange shrimp*, and the classic *twice cooked pork*. The portions are large, the prices are fair, and the food is delicious. If you are looking for both authentic and tasty Chinese food, you must visit the Peking Chinese Restaurant.

Phood on Main

(951) 276-7111

3700 Main Street · Riverside 92501

Type of Cuisine: American

Price Range: \$ · Child Friendly

One of Riverside's best kept culinary secrets is Phood on Main. This "hip & creative luncheonerie" is the brain child of Executive Chef Marla Cohen and is Riverside's most unique restaurant. Located on the lower level of the sprawling Mission Galleria antique store across from the Mission Inn, this lunch-only restaurant is open from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday – Friday and serves a variety of dishes that scream freshness and taste delicious. What makes them so different is the way in which the food can be ordered. You can order an item solo (single), duo (2 items), or trio (3 items), with the price determined by the number of items chosen. Some of their wonderful, made from scratch, selections include an array of salads like the *apple pecan salad* with blue cheese and dried cranberries and a nice *papaya spinach salad* with strawberries and almonds; while the *roasted pear fig jam* and *goat cheese on cinnamon raisin toast*; *open face tuna melt* with capers, avocados, and cheese on focaccia bread; the popular *honey orange crispy duck sandwich*; and the *Kobe Philly sandwich* are just a few of the yummy selections you can order. Also included are some incredible desserts that can be part of your selection. No matter which items you choose, you will thoroughly savor the cuisine of Phood on Main. They also run an outstanding catering business that can provide delicious options for your next event.



Restaurant Omakase

(951) 788-8820

3720 Mission Inn Avenue · Riverside 92501

Type of Cuisine: French/Japanese/California

Price Range: \$\$-\$\$\$ · Beer & Wine

"The vision for Restaurant Omakase is to not only provide a memorable meal, but to create an entire experience redefining the conventional theory of fine dining." This description, found on their website, says it all. The captivating presentations, commitment to using fresh, locally grown ingredients; and extremely creative flavor combinations makes Restaurant Omakase a real culinary find. The chic restaurant interior seats 40 and is warm and inviting.

The lemon and lime colored walls and candlelit mahogany tables set the tone for the magnificent Japanese-French infused dishes that Owner/chef Brein Clements, his wife, Roryann, and his very talented kitchen staff eagerly create.

The menu changes monthly and features a myriad of delicious appetizers, entrees, and desserts, each designed to impress and dazzle all of your senses. For those who really appreciate fine food, the chef's tasting menu features seasonal and spontaneous selections paired with wines. Choose from 5, 8 and 10 course food and wine tasting pairings. Thanks to Chef Brein, Riverside residents no longer need to travel to Napa Valley for outstanding food and wine combinations!

Saffron Restaurant & Catering

(951) 367-1396

3425 Mission Inn Avenue · Riverside 92501
Type of Cuisine: Continental with a California twist
Price Range \$\$-\$\$\$
Beer & Wine

Linda Rouyer and her mother, Sherry Powell, are no strangers to fine dining. Owners of the highly regarded Saffron Catering Company and praised for the fantastic job they did at the Guasti Villa, the city of Riverside is excited that Saffron has relocated to the Riverside Art Museum where they continue to dazzle with their tempting array of Continental dishes with a distinct California twist. Executive Chef Matt Sramek is a master at creating exciting and tempting dishes whether you dine in or savor his creations at a party or function they cater. Some of the many great lunch items to choose from include fresh toasted *Panini*, *garlic chicken* with smoked Gouda and chipotle aioli, *herb grilled chicken salad* with currants, manchego cheese, pistachios and lime, *smoked turkey Cobb salad*, the juicy *Saffron turkey burger*, or a delightful 3-course Prix Fixe lunch. For dinner, the Chef offers a 3-course Prix Fixe dinner with many delectable options from which to decide. I have experienced Saffron many times throughout the years and love the creative and fresh approach to their foods.



Smokey Canyon BBQ

(951) 782-8811

5225 Canyon Crest Drive, #9 · Riverside 92507
Type of Cuisine: American/Barbecue
Price Range: \$-\$\$
Child Friendly
Beer & Wine

If you like great BBQ in a friendly family setting, welcome to Smokey Canyon BBQ in the Canyon Crest Towne Center. This fairly new restaurant features some mighty fine grub that will certainly fill you up and not hurt your pocketbook. The ½ lb. *angus beef burger* with crispy bacon, cheddar cheese, fried onion straws, and BBQ sauce is wonderful, as are the slowly smoked *St. Louis style ribs*, *smoked chicken*, and *fried catfish* entrees. You can also enjoy a first-class smoked *turkey Panini*, a juicy *brisket Panini* with Ortega chilies, jack cheese and creamy horseradish sauce, and for dessert, you must order the *old fashioned bread pudding* and the unique *blackberry cobbler* topped with a coconut pecan crust and served with vanilla ice cream. Whether you dine in or have them cater your next event, you will surely enjoy the fine smoked fare offered by Smokey Canyon BBQ.

Trilussa Ristorante

(951) 683-3494

3737 Main Street Suite 100 · Riverside 92501
Type of Cuisine: Italian · Price Range: \$\$-\$\$\$ · Full Bar

Trilussa Ristorante is a large casual upscale Italian restaurant that offers traditional Italian cuisine and is located in an old bank building down the street from City Hall. The main dining room is spacious and elegant and the converted bank vault is now a classy wine vault, with a seating area for small banquets or parties. There is also a large patio area that allows one to relax and dine outdoors. The entrees that I have enjoyed immensely are the *farfalle al salmone*, *gnocchi in tomato sauce*, *veal Marsala*, *tangy pork chop* marinated in balsamic vinegar, and the *tasty petto di pollo caprese*. The food is both fresh and full of flavor while the prices are fair.

Honorable Mentions

Gra-Pow Thai Restaurant

(951) 780-1132

497 E. Alessandro Boulevard, Suite D · Riverside 92508
Type of Cuisine: Thai
Price Range \$-\$\$ · Child Friendly · Beer & Wine

Gra-Pow is a visually dramatic and upscale looking Thai restaurant whose dishes represent the merging of classic and modern Thai cuisine. The modern Asian influenced sage green and copper colored walls, soft and bright paintings and pictures, and a large open kitchen are just a few of the many beautiful design features that help create a most relaxing dining experience. Dishes like the *king's fried rice*, *8 Warriors*, *Thai salmon*, *BBQ Thai chicken*, and the impressive *Gra-Pow hot plate* are just some of the many terrific dishes you can expect to find.

Punjab Palace

(951) 351-8968

10359 Magnolia Avenue · Riverside 92505
Type of Cuisine: Indian
Price Range: \$-\$\$ · Child Friendly · Beer & Wine

Punjab Palace is a restaurant that offers the best Indian cuisine in Riverside. There is a great “all you can eat” buffet offered daily as well as some terrific menu items. Dishes like the *chicken malai*, the impressive *mixed tandoori grill*, the popular *lamb shahi korma*, the creative *fish garlic*, and two wonderful Indian breads, the *paratha* and the *Kashmiri naan*, are very good. If you love Indian cuisine, you will enjoy Punjab Palace.

3639 Main Street
Riverside 92501
Type of Cuisine: American
(Sandwiches, Salads & Baked Goods)
Price Range: \$
Child Friendly
Beer & Wine

Simple Simon's is one of those great little restaurants that dot the Riverside area and have a huge following - for good reason! They serve a unique array of breakfast and lunch items along with a terrific selection of cakes, pastries, salads, and of course 17 of the best Artisan breads you can find in our area. Some of their must-try breakfast items include the *winter omelet* with gorgonzola cheese, onions, pecans, apples, and their *home-made granola*; while the best sandwiches include the *chicken apple sausage on Focaccia* with gouda cheese, the *roast lamb* with grilled eggplant, feta cheese, and tomato fennel olive sauce; and their *vegetarian Mediterranean melt*. Make sure you save room for their decadent desserts. Whether you dine indoors or dine in their spacious outdoor patio area, you will thoroughly enjoy this marvelous restaurant.



2472 University Avenue
Riverside 92507
Type of Cuisine: Mexican
Price Range: \$-\$\$
Child Friendly
Beer & Wine

Zacatecas Café has been a favorite of locals since 1963. The menu features a variety of some very tasty traditional, as well as some original, Mexican dishes that are outstanding. A warm cup of their signature Colorado sauce and some crispy warm tortilla chips set the tone for a special dining experience. Some of the many dishes that deserve your attention include the *huevos con nopales*, *Mole de Gallina*, the hefty *carne asada torta sandwich*, and the *Chile Colorado dinner plate*. Believe it or not, the special *deluxe cheese burger* is another terrific item to consider (I still can't believe that I ordered a burger in a Mexican restaurant... but boy, am I glad I did!). You will not go wrong with Zacatecas!

NOTES

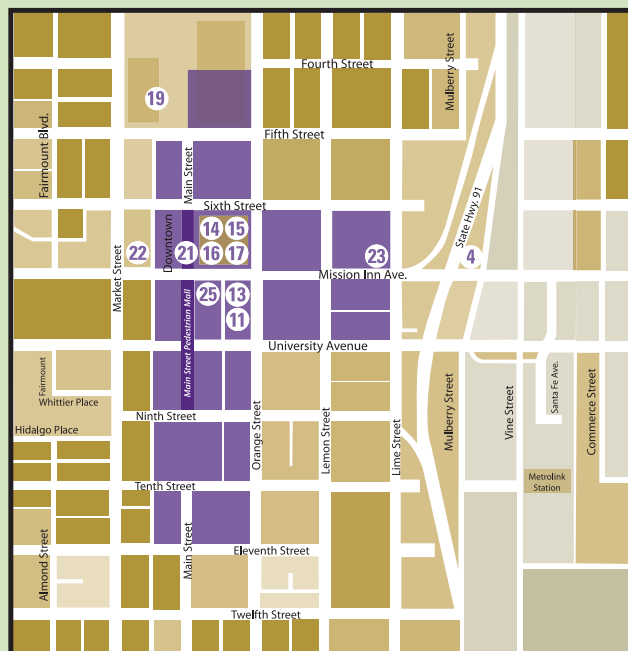
[illegible]

Finding Riverside's Top 25 Restaurants 2008

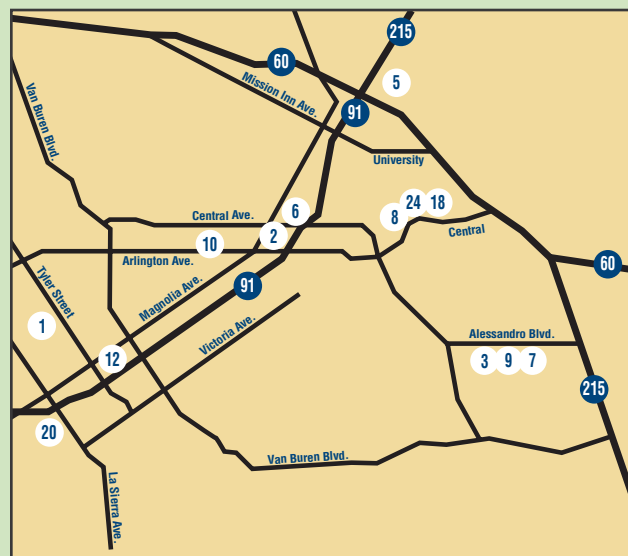
- 1 Anchos Southwest Grill
- 2 Bo Bo Thai Restaurant
- 3 Cactus Cantina
- 4 Café Sevilla
- 5 Ciao Bella Ristorante
- 6 Citrus City Grille
- 7 CP's Place
- 8 Crest Café
- 9 Creola's Fine Dining
- 10 Cuban Café
- 11 Dona Timo's La Cascada
Mexican Seafood Restaurant
- 12 Gerard's Eve Bistro
- 13 Mario's Place
- 14 Mission Inn: Bella Trattoria Italian Bistro
- 15 Mission Inn: Duane's Prime Steaks & Seafood
- 16 Mission Inn: Las Campanas
- 17 Mission Inn: Mission Inn Restaurant
- 18 Monark Asian Bistro
- 19 Olio Steak and Seafood Ristorante
at the Marriott Hotel
- 20 Peking Chinese Restaurant
- 21 Phood on Main
- 22 Restaurant Omakase
- 23 Saffron Restaurant & Catering
- 24 Smokey Canyon BBQ
- 25 Trilussa Ristorante



Downtown Area Restaurants



Riverside Area Restaurants





About Allan Borgen

Allan Borgen has been a restaurant critic for more the 20 years. He has seven years experience working in various restaurants in Los Angeles and has taken chef's training and restaurant management classes.

For the past 20 years, Allan has produced and hosted the "Let's Dine Out Show." He is also the Restaurant Critic for the *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin* and the *San Bernardino Sun* newspapers and is a member of the Southern California Restaurant Writers Association.

Hear Allan on the *Let's Dine Out* radio show every Saturday afternoon from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. on News Talk 590 am, KTIE. The show is all about food, travel, and local entertainment. Join Allan on a restaurant review by visiting his web site www.letsdineoutshow.com and go on to the **"Be a Food Critic"** section.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

**CITY OF RIVERSIDE
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
(951) 826-5551
WWW.RIVERSIDECA.GOV**

**RIVERSIDE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
(951) 684-4636
TOLL FREE: (888) 913-4636
WWW.RIVERSIDECB.COM**

THE TWENTY-FIVE BEST RESTAURANTS IN RIVERSIDE



ANCHOS SOUTHWEST GRILL

BO BO THAI RESTAURANT

CACTUS CANTINA

CAFÉ SEVILLA

CIAO BELLA RISTORANTE

CITRUS CITY GRILLE

CP'S PLACE

CREST CAFÉ

CREOLA'S FINE DINING

CUBAN CAFÉ

DONA TIMO'S LA CASCADA

MEXICAN SEAFOOD RESTAURANT

GERARD'S EVE BISTRO

MARIO'S PLACE

MISSION INN: BELLA TRATTORIA ITALIAN BISTRO

MISSION INN: DUANE'S PRIME STEAKS & SEAFOOD

MISSION INN: LAS CAMPANAS

MISSION INN RESTAURANT

MONARK ASIAN BISTRO

OLIO STEAK AND SEAFOOD RISTORANTE

PEKING CHINESE RESTAURANT

PHOOD ON MAIN

RESTAURANT OMAKASE

SAFFRON RESTAURANT & CATERING

SMOKEY CANYON BBQ

TRILUSSA RISTORANTE

